



River Theme

Reading

Read a book about the Mississippi River or another river. (See suggestions in "River Literature Connections" in Teacher's Guide.) Read and discuss folk tales, oral traditions and songs about the Mississippi River.

History/geography/art

Create a "Landscape of Stories" mural with the class.

Create a large, colorful map of the Mississippi River (or the upper part of it) and use it for placing students' small story-posters of various historical events and sites. Stories may include, e.g., geological origins of the river (show River Warren tributary), American Indian place-stories, natural history, fur trade, village and cities, explorers, etc. Draw pictures to go with the stories. Use reference materials such as river history posters (included in the Big River Teacher's Guide).

History

Identify the origin of place names such as Mississippi, Minnesota, Mendota, Pike Island, Carver's Cave, St. Paul, Red Wing, Kaposia, etc. See "The Junction of Rivers" poster/guide about American Indians of the Twin Cities area, produced by the Minnesota Historical Society. Include on "Landscape of Stories" mural (see previous.)

History. Write a paper about the Dakota culture of American Indians who lived along the river before arrival of more recent cultures; then find out about the Dakota today. See posters on river history produced by the National Park Service. Use exhibits and references from Fort Snelling State Park Visitor Center.

Geography/history

Compare modern maps of the river with those of 100 or 200 years ago. Identify how the maps are different. How has the river or land changed?

Art

Draw or paint the Mississippi River based on your field trip experience or other interaction with the river. Make a poster about how to care for the river.

Music

Listen to various river music. Use the video "Mississippi Singing" to hear samples of several pieces, or listen to a tape of Mississippi River songs by Charlie Maguire (both available from the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area.) Learn the song "Great Mississippi" by Charlie Maguire. (Sheet music for Charlie's songs are also available from the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area.)

Writing/poetry

Write a poem about the river; read it to the class. (See page in Teacher's Guide on some forms of poetry.)

Reading/writing

Collect river-related news stories from newspapers. Share them with the class. Arrange them into your own River News newspaper. Add your own stories and pictures, and write an editorial for your paper.

Science

Learn about the water cycle, and draw a diagram to show how streams, rivers, groundwater, lakes and oceans are all connected. Is it true that the earth is one body of water?

Service education

Identify and carry out a project to benefit the Mississippi. Examples include educating others about run-off pollution, stenciling storm drains, cleaning up litter, and planting native trees, shrubs and grasses. (See "Pollution Prevention Project Guide.")

Science

Use the "enviroscape" model (available from the Center for Global Environmental Education or Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge) for learning about runoff pollution and how to prevent it. It's a fun and easy to use model that really attracts kids. The "enviroscape" includes curricula, and can be used with K-12 students.

Social studies/science/art

Learn about various boats used on the Mississippi in the past and present. Write about how and for what they were used, when used, and unique features. Illustrate your report with a drawing of the vessel, or make a model.

Social studies

View the PBS NOVA video on the flood of '93 (available for check out from Mississippi National River and Recreation Area); discuss how ways that people use the river could be changed to reduce the problems associated with such floods. View

"Mississippi Singing" video (available for check-out from the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area) to identify and evaluate various uses of the river, and which are most important to you.

History/writing/theater

Learn what it was like to live on the river one century ago in St. Paul. Then write a make-believe diary about your life, and that of your family and friends. Make it into a short play, and perform it for your class.

History

See The Story of Minnesota's Past by Rhoda Gilman (Teachers' Ed., published by the Minnesota Historical Society), and associated activity book by Steve Sandell, for regional history and related activities.

Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, 2001.